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# Re-evaluating rural environments: rural tourism development in Japan

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## **Re-evaluating rural environments: Rural tourism development in Japan.**

**Megumi Doshita**

### **Abstract**

The beautiful scenery of rural environments has been created by the agricultural and forestry industries but nowadays, in various rural areas, tourism has become lucrative and has developed as a leading industry. When the utilisation of rural environments is evaluated by focusing on the term 'resources,' several key aspects in which rural environments are recognised as tourism resources are revealed. In addition, concerning the nature of resources, rural environments utilised for tourism practices are symbolic rather than ecological resources. In Japan, there are three catalysts for transforming rural elements into tourism resources. These transformations are actualised by the expansion of the gaps between urban and rural areas, by the recognition of rural environments as *satoyama*, a key concept of nationwide environmental discussion, and by the nomination of a rural environment as a national property. Miyama Town, Kyoto Prefecture, Japan, is now famous for its successful tourism development, and a case study of Miyama can enhance the discussion of rural tourism development by providing rich information about local people's involvement.

**Key words** Rural tourism, rural environments, resources, *satoyama*

### **Introduction**

Rural tourism is one of the most popular tour forms in the world today, and there is a large literature based on case studies of rural tourism in diverse countries, including Spain (Devesa et al. 2010), Czech Republic (Horáková 2008), Hungary (Szörényiné Kukorelli 2011), Serbia (Dimitrovski et al. 2012), China (Su 2011), Korea (Park and Yoon 2009) and Malaysia (Liu 2006). The favourable development of rural tourism has resulted from successful matches between supply and demand. The majority of human beings in the world have come to live in urban areas and many of them desire to spend their holidays in rural areas (e.g. Greffe 1994). In contrast, the people living in rural areas have faced economic, social, and environmental difficulties (e.g. Brown and Hall 2000), and diverse rural communities have attempted to solve these difficulties through tourism development. In other words, rural communities offer tourism related services and facilities in order to create new economic and social opportunities (e.g. Pizam and Upchurch 2002, Grant 2000) and to protect their way of life, whereas urban dwellers visit those areas to enjoy their leisure time.

There is no doubt that rural environments have attracted tourists worldwide, yet rural environments are not solely for tourism. Rural environments are usually utilised for other economic activities such as agriculture and forestry, and local residents have produced commercial crops, vegetables and timber by cultivating these environments. These well-managed farms and forests have become a type of tourist attraction because of the beautiful scenery. However, nowadays, tourism practices are becoming more lucrative than agriculture and forestry in a number of rural areas. Therefore it seems to be crucial to examine the utilisation of rural environments in depth, first by focusing on the term 'resources', and second, on the three catalysts of utilisation of rural environments for tourism in Japan. This will be followed by a case study of Miyama Town, Kyoto Prefecture, Japan.

### **Rural environments for tourism.**

Until the mid-twentieth century, resources were usually considered to be material objects, such as water, earth, coal, iron and oil, and to exist at the opposite pole from human societies. However, this understanding of resources has been less dominant since 1933 when Zimmermann claimed that resources could not be only natural but also cultural, in other words, they '...exist[ed] as a form of interaction between physical environment (nature) and society' (Hanink 2000: 227). Zimmermann (1951: 814-815) defines resources as

...highly dynamic functional concepts; [resources] are not, they become, they evolve out of the triune interaction of nature, and culture, in which nature sets outer limits, but man and culture are largely responsible for the portion of physical totality that is made available for human use.

In other words, resources are now considered to exist only as the result of the interaction between human beings and nature.

In tourism studies, tourism resources are also considered to be determined by the relation between the people in tourism practices and the environment. In the 1960s before the discussion of tourism and the environment had developed, Clawson and Knetsch evaluated the use of natural resources for the purpose of recreation.

According to them:

...natural resources for outdoor recreation include areas of land, bodies of water, forests, swamps and other natural features, and even air spaces, [...] they become resources for outdoor recreation only as they are useful for this purpose. (Clawson and Knetsch, 1966: 7)

They also added that some abandoned natural environments might have future value for the purpose of outdoor recreation as well as for agriculture and forestry.

Several scholars have proposed typologies of recreation or tourism resources, including not only the natural environment but also the built environment. For example, Kreutzwiser (1989: 21-22) states that '[a] recreational resource can be defined as an element of natural or man-modified environment which provides an opportunity to satisfy recreational wants.' Pigram and Jenkins (1999) also introduce several classifications of recreation resources proposed by tourism researchers. These cover a range of facilities and objects from land, water and vegetation to cinemas, restaurants and theme parks. For example, Pigram and Jenkins adapted Ravenscroft's classification (1992, cited in Pigram and Jenkins 1999: 67), which contains five different sets of facilities. Two cover the facilities related to the natural environment, such as agricultural land and beaches, whereas the other three concern the built environment such as museums and leisure centres. From this brief overview it can be seen that the discussion of typologies of tourism resources have focused on the different characteristics of the natural and built environment.

Fennell suggests a simpler classification than Ravenscroft's, and he claims that tourism resources can be understood by two different characters: developed and undeveloped. Developed resources, such as highways, buildings and sewerage, 'facilitate the use of a given area,' and undeveloped ones, such as mountains, forests and rivers 'may be found both in urban and wilderness environments but the degree to which they are recognised as such is individual dependent and perhaps situation dependent' (1999: 68). Rural environments seem, then, to be categorised as an undeveloped resource.

In addition, an undeveloped resource can be utilised for tourism when people appreciate its value but the same resource will no longer attract visitors once people

lose interest. As a result, 'these resources may act either as catalysts in facilitating and drawing people to a tourist region or as constraints to visitation' (Fennell 1999: 69). Fennell's statement indicates that, on the one hand, undeveloped tourism resources are identified according to the stakeholders' subjective preference for and appreciation of the targeted objects, and on the other hand, these resources will be considered insignificant as soon as stakeholders' interest fades away. Indeed, tourism resources are undoubtedly human dependent and vulnerable since they are created and developed by stakeholders' personal emotion and by their interaction with environments in potential tourist sites. Rural environments might lose their attractiveness if villagers reduce agricultural and forestry activities and the beautiful scenery disappears.

Liu (2003: 464) suggests dividing tourism resources into three types: common resources, shared tourist resources and touristic resources. Common resources are used in most industries and everyday life, such as land and water, whereas shared tourist resources are mainly used in tourism and a limited number of other industries like fisheries and agriculture, such as sea and forest. Touristic resources are only suitable for tourism purposes, such as sandy beaches and snowy slopes.

It seems that rural environments can be an example of the second type of resource, shared tourist resources, yet Liu suggests that the three different types of resources are combined for tourism development, depending on the balance with other industries as well as geographical conditions. In other words, some tourism resources are not only determined by stakeholders in tourism practices but are also utilised and exploited by anonymous participants in various industries and societies.

From a different perspective, rural environments are being discussed as symbolic and/or ecological resources. In Japan, from 2002-2006, a government funded project named 'Distribution and Sharing of Resources in Symbolic and Ecological Systems' was conducted. According to the project website, '[t]his project aims at developing a new integrative perspective of anthropological research through focusing upon feedback processes between formations of "symbolic resources" and of "ecological resources."' In addition, '[its] theoretical attempts are directed at establishing the

thesis that modes of their allocation, distribution and common sharing, reveal the most fundamental aspect of social mechanisms.’<sup>1</sup>

In the series of discussions on this project, some key researchers (for example Uchibori 2007, Moriyama 2007, and Kuzuno 2007) argue about the characteristics of natural environments and state that these natural environments can be both ecological and symbolic resources. When natural environments are cultivated and utilised for agriculture, forestry and fishery, in other words for making products, they are ecological resources. In contrast, when these strengthen social status or authoritative powers, they are symbolic resources. Doshita (2012) considers that most environmental features used as tourism resources are not ecological but symbolic resources, since through tourism practices, diverse stakeholders do not make products and goods by cultivating the land, but they seek their own goals such as rural revitalisation or individual refreshment.

Accordingly, the following points are crucial for the utilisation of rural environments for tourism. First, resources are determined by the interaction between human beings and the environment, and second, rural environments become tourism resources when diverse people recognise them as potential tourist attractions. The scenery should be conserved to continue to attract a diverse clientele, because there is a possibility that people will lose interest. In addition, rural environments should be utilised as efficiently for tourism as for other industries, such as agriculture and forestry. Furthermore, rural environments utilised for tourism practices are not ecological but symbolic resources.

### **Japanese rural areas as tourism resources**

In this section, the multiple ways of the utilisation of rural environments for tourism in Japan will be described. One noteworthy trend is that rural environments have attracted many people in the last few decades, and there were three different catalysts for transforming rural elements into tourism resources. The first catalyst was that nationwide demographic change had resulted not only in the rise in

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<sup>1</sup> This website has been discontinued since the project ended, but the same explanation is now accessible via the online database of Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (<http://kaken.nii.ac.jp/d/p/14083101/2006/6/en.en.html>).

popularity of rural areas among urban dwellers but also in the demand for alternative economic activities from rural communities. The second catalyst was that nationwide development had caused serious environmental destruction including the alteration of rural environments. As a result, the folk term, *satoyama*, became familiar and was used as a keyword for both environmental protests and tourism promotion. The third catalyst was that the law relating to Japanese national properties created an additional category of properties in order to include those rural environments which had been continually cultivated by rural farmers and foresters over a long period of time. The detailed explanation of these processes is described below.

### **Demographic change and rural tourism.**

In Japan, the pattern of population distribution has changed dynamically since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Before the end of the Second World War, the majority of Japanese people lived in rural areas, for example, in 1930, 25.7 million of the total 64.4 million people lived in towns and villages, namely small-sized municipal divisions whose population was less than 5000. However, by 1960, the balance of population between large-sized and small-sized municipal divisions had reversed, and in 1960 there were two major groups, one of which lived in small-sized divisions with the population size of 10,000-19,999, and the other lived in cities, that is, large-sized divisions with one million and over population. In 2010, of the total 128 million population, the majority lived in the areas with a population of one million and over (Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication 2014: Section 2-4).

This dramatic demographic shift from rural to urban areas is strongly connected to the decline in the number of farmers and foresters. Half of the working population in Japan was once engaged in agriculture and/or forestry (Statistics Bureau of the Prime Minister's Office 1967) yet by 1960 the percentage of farmers and foresters in the working population had decreased to 29 per cent. The percentage has fallen continually and by 2014 the percentage of farmers and foresters had shrunk to 3.6 percent (Statistics Bureau, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2014: Section 16-3).

Rural societies in Japan have experienced a downturn in agriculture and forestry. One reason for the downturn is the increase of imports of timber and agricultural

products. Since 1960 the Japanese government has enforced the liberalisation of timber imports and this action has seriously damaged Japanese forestry. In the 1980s diverse foreign countries, principally the United States, demanded the liberalisation of imports of agricultural products. The Uruguay Round of the GATT trade talks, from 1986 to 1994, discussed the provision of the liberalisation of rice imports which was likely to damage Japanese farmers since rice was their primary product. In fact, since the international agreement in the Uruguay Round was approved, Japanese farmers have faced a dramatic change of rice market (for example Kitade 2001).

Owing to the fact that rural societies have been facing the problems described above, some efficient strategies and activities for revitalisation have been required.

Accordingly, in the last few decades, tourism has been realised as an economic activity by emphasising the cultural and social differences between urban and rural areas. In this respect, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery has promoted *gurīn tūrisumu* (green tourism) since the early 1990s. While this *gurīn tūrisumu* is labelled *green tourism*, its meaning is similar to rural tourism in English. This ambiguous term was chosen by government officials and tourism researchers, who contributed to the planning of policy, as a fashionable and suitable term for new tourism development in Japan.

By enforcing *gurīn tūrisumu* policies, rural communities can enjoy new economic activities and sustain rural residents' income level. This *gurīn tūrisumu* is also expected to enable rural people to continue to live in their home towns. The result of the policy is positive because more than half of the 689 local governments claim that the economic ramifications have been considerable and in fact as many as forty percent report that employment expansion is beyond expectations (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery 2006).

To sum up, tourism is considered to be an alternative economic activity to agriculture and forestry, and rural communities themselves have become tourist attractions by taking advantage of their differences from urban societies formed by the dynamic demographic shift in the last half century. Although now it is the Japanese national government which creates the opportunity to utilise rural environments for tourism



resources, historically it has been the rural residents themselves who have conserved rural environments despite depopulation and the downturn of agriculture and forestry. This long-term conservation keeps rural environments attractive to tourists from urban areas.

### **Resource development and *satoyama*.**

In Japan, the word *satoyama* is a key concept indicating the rural environment in relation to environmental conservation and tourism, and this helps to attract a significant number of tourists. The word *satoyama* was used in many rural areas in Japan as a local term before the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For example, in Kiso, an area in central Japan, *satoyama* meant the mountainous areas near villages and houses (Teramachi 1759, cited in Takeuchi 2001) whereas in Aomori, in the north of Japan, *satoyama* represented the mountains where people engaged in forestry without staying overnight (Arioka 2004). Concerning the traditional rural lifestyle as well as these usages, the original meaning of *satoyama* can be understood as forests or mountainous areas near living spaces where people obtained firewood, thatch or organic fertiliser.

However, since the 1950s the areas recognised as *satoyama* have faced environmental destruction and redevelopment for residential and industrial use owing to drastic changes in rural areas. In fact, the shift of energy resources from firewood to fossil fuels made *satoyama* less valuable than before. Agricultural modernisation also impacted on *satoyama* because of the adoption of chemical fertilisers instead of organic ones. In addition, countless rural residents moved to urban areas leaving behind cultivated land including *satoyama* (e.g. Maruyama 2007:3-4). On the whole, *satoyama* lost its value and was neglected.

Consequently, the importance of *satoyama* conservation started to be discussed by not only agriculturalists and forestry experts but also environmental protesters and the public. According to several articles such as Takeuchi (2001) or Maruyama (2007), the word *satoyama* has been used in environmental discussion since as long ago as the 1970s. According to Maruyama (2007), several specialists in agriculture and forestry started to insist on the necessity for the conservation of whole rural

environments including *satoyama* during that decade, though those professionals often pinpointed their own special interest such as paddy fields or forests.

In the early 1980s, the word *satoyama* was frequently used in environmental symposiums and by the late 1980s the word *satoyama* increasingly appeared in the media, with the meaning of a type of woodland or a form of natural environment near residential areas. In the early 1990s, the word *satoyama* started to appear in articles describing environmental protests, especially the protests against golf course development. In this context, *satoyama* was defined simply as hilly land behind agricultural and mountain villages but it was also noted that *satoyama* usually meant coppices which were once used to obtain firewood, organic fertilisers and timber.

From around 1995 to 2005 *satoyama* appeared increasingly in the newspaper because during the planning stage for Aichi Expo 2005 the proposed site was considered to be *satoyama* and the environmental importance of this particular site was debated nationwide. Through the series of environmental discussions in relation to Aichi Expo 2005, the word *satoyama* became defined as a whole set of rural environments which are valuable, accessible, co-existing forms of nature. This new definition is effective in helping diverse urban dwellers to create their own ideal images of rural areas and in attracting public attention to the countryside.

In the context of tourism practices, this *satoyama* often appears as a popular ecotourism attraction. In Japan, ecotourism was introduced in 1990 by the Environment Agency (since 2001, the Ministry of the Environment) as a new way to use Japan's National Parks. Originally, some of Japan's more distinctive natural settings, for example, Shiretoko which was selected as a World Natural Heritage site in 2005, were considered to be the best sites for ecotourism. In addition, several environmental NGOs such as the Nature Conservation Society of Japan have promoted ecotourism by emphasising the importance of environmentally friendly tours.

In addition to this movement, from 1994 the Environment Agency started to tackle the environmental management of cultivated areas, as approximately 75 percent of the land area of Japan was then used for agricultural and forestry cultivation (see

Environment Agency and Asia Air Survey Co., LTD. 1999). These areas had always been governed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery but the Environment Agency came to consider them as being environmentally valuable. Consequently, some cultivated land areas started to be considered as potential sites for ecotourism.

Actions by the government became more visible in the early 2000s. In 2002, the Ministry of the Environment coined the term *satochi-satoyama*, which is equivalent to and has almost the same meaning as *satoyama*, in order to crystallise its desire to conserve the cultivated land. The next year the Ministry held a conference in order to discuss ecotourism promotion, emphasising that ecotourism in Japan targeted not only wilderness but also cultivated areas. In the following year, 2004, the Ministry started to select rural areas famous for *satoyama* as pilot ecotourism sites. Thus, although only untouched natural settings were originally proposed as ecotourism sites, cultivated land, namely *satoyama*, is now being included as well.

Accordingly, a whole set of rural environments is often named *satoyama* which has become a keyword to express the distinctive environmental value of rural areas. In the last few decades, this whole set has come to attract most tourists in Japan and ecotourism promotion by the Ministry of the Environment has accelerated the utilisation of rural environments, namely *satoyama*, for tourism practices. As described in the former section, the same rural environments are, in fact, utilised for *gurīn tūrisumu* promotion by different agencies, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery, each with their own criteria for recognition.

### **Resource development and nomination as a national property.**

Another way that rural elements are developed into tourism resources is by nomination as heritage or national properties. In Japan the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties has dealt with both cultural and natural properties since the 1950s. Before the Second World War, there were separate laws for the protection of cultural and natural properties, yet, after the war the Japanese government started to prepare a new law for the protection of cultural properties a number of which were neglected owing to the defeat of the war.

In this discussion, several ambiguous points concerning cultural and natural properties were examined, such as the definition and interpretation of culture, the differences between science and culture, and the possibility that places of scenic beauty and natural monuments could be considered to be cultural. Eventually, the government decided both cultural and natural properties would be protected by the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (The Agency for Cultural Affairs 2001: 24-28). In 1950 this law was passed with the understanding that it is internationally unique because one single law covers and protects all cultural and natural properties.

Concerning categories for rural environments, originally the law had only the category of Places of Scenic Beauty which includes gardens, bridges, gorges, coastal areas and mountains. A potential area for inclusion in this category is assessed to determine whether it possesses a high artistic or aesthetic value for Japan (The Agency for Cultural Affairs 2008: 40). In this category, gardens and bridges are considered to be cultural places, and other places of scenic beauty, such as coastal areas and mountains, are recognised as natural ones. A nomination in this category, especially those of natural places, is given to protect beautiful sites as ideal and genuine forms of nature, in other words, the most essential point of this category is that the selected natural environments remain intact.

In fact, before the 1990s the Agency for Cultural Affairs seemed to avoid discussing the potential for selecting cultivated land since it has always been modified by local residents and therefore it was difficult to judge its genuine or original form. However, since the 1990s, rural environments such as paddy fields and forests have been considered as potential areas for Places of Scenic Beauty. This shift resulted from nationwide environmental discussions and from the international appreciation of cultivated land. For example, the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras, the Philippines, was inscribed as a site of Cultural Landscapes on the World Heritage List in 1995 (World Heritage Committee 1995). Indeed, in line with this series of movements, rural environments came to be assessed in terms of cultural properties.

Rural environments were nominated under the category of Places of Scenic Beauty yet today there is a more appropriate category for rural environments, that is, Cultural Landscapes. This category was included in Japanese law in 2002, ten years

after the World Heritage Committee introduced it into the institution of World Heritage sites in 1992. In Japanese law this Cultural Landscapes category overlaps the category of Places of Scenic Beauty, yet the artistic or aesthetic scenery constructed by human-nature interaction, namely rural landscape, is usually categorised as Cultural Landscapes nowadays (see Bunkacho Bunkazai-bu Kinenbutsu-ka 2005).

In contrast to these two categories for natural environments, since the middle of the 1970s the Agency for Cultural Affairs has been involved with rural conservation by considering rural settings as being cultural and by creating another category, Preservation Districts for Groups of Historic Structures. This was introduced in 1975 in order to protect not only a group of historic structures such as old buildings, temples or traditional houses but also the whole area, in other words, cities, towns and villages, where those structures exist. This category, as opposed to Places of Scenic Beauty, was developed in order to conserve not only artificial objects but also their surroundings including natural settings.

Originally, prior to the national government action several local authorities enacted bylaws regarding streetscape or townscape conservation. These authorities aimed to protect their local landscapes including groups of traditional buildings as well as natural settings around these artificial structures. The Agency examined both these bylaws and foreign systems concerning townscape conservation and then created the unique and appropriate category for Japan, that is, Preservation Districts for Groups of Historic Structures (see Ito 2000). In this Preservation Districts category, the groups of buildings or artificial objects are registered as cultural properties and the areas surrounding them are approved as conservation areas.

In addition, when the Agency established this category, it intentionally set up a number of financial support systems. For example, if an area is registered as a Preservation District, the local community qualifies for national and regional government grants through the local authority in order to protect and sustain its historic structures. Furthermore, '...support is also given through preferential tax treatment' (The Agency for Cultural Affairs 2008: 42), meaning that the local residents receive a tax reduction on their properties including houses and land. In addition, the local governments of these selected areas become eligible to apply for

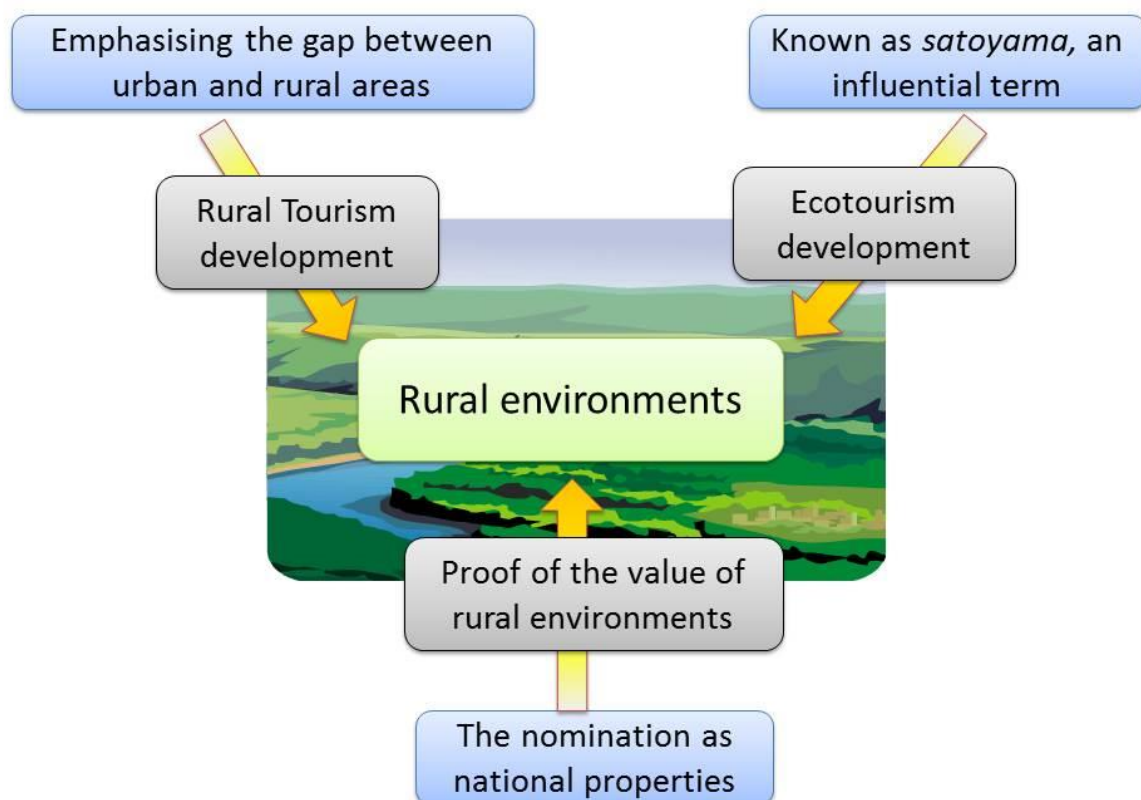
other national government funding. Thus, it can be seen that this category is useful for rural development in terms of financial support.

To sum up, there are several ways for rural environments to be nominated as national properties nowadays, and this nomination is valuable to rural environments for developing tourism. In fact, the nomination as national properties is effective in proving the value of rural environments and in attracting tourists. In this context, rural environments conserved by local residents are judged by the national and international authorities and when the result is positive, these environments become distinctive resources for tourism practices.

### Miyama Town in Japan: a case study

As explained above, rural environments can be utilised for tourism resources in three different ways, namely, by emphasising the gaps between urban and rural areas, by classifying them as *satoyama*, or by being nominated as a national property (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The utilisation of rural environments for tourism in Japan



Miyama Town, Kyoto Prefecture, Japan (Plates 1, 2, 3), is an appropriate example in this context, since this rural community has promoted its tourism in all three ways.

**Plate 1:** Miyama landscape.



**Source:** Author photo

The following descriptions are based on a long-term anthropological fieldwork concerning environmental tourism development (for this author's doctoral research). Following preparatory on-site research in 2002, the main fieldwork was conducted in 2003-2004 with primary research continuing from 2005.

Miyama Town is located 56 kilometres north of Kyoto City and 50 kilometres south of the Sea of Japan in the middle of the Tanba highlands which consist of mountains 600-800 metres high and their valleys. The total area of Miyama Town is 340 square kilometres, 96 percent of which consists of mountains and forests, while the remaining four percent consists of farmland, rivers, and living space for the local residents. The valleys in Miyama were formed by the stream of the Yura River and its tributaries, along which most residential areas are located. Miyama Town was amalgamated with three neighbouring towns in 2006, but when Miyama Town was

an independent municipality, the total population consisted of approximately 5,200 people in about 1,950 households most of which generated their incomes from a combination of agriculture, forestry and paid employment (Miyama-cho Somuka 1996).

**Plate 2:** Kita Village in Miyama



**Source:** Author photo

Historically, Miyama residents engaged in agriculture and forestry and in the 1950s when forestry was generating huge profits the population once reached over 10,000. However, along with the nationwide downturn in agriculture and forestry and the upturn in urban development, by the late 1970s the devastation of cultivated land and forests as well as depopulation had become severe. A forester whose relatives observed this drastic change commented that he could not imagine what his relatives felt when a half of their neighbours disappeared in one decade.

When these problems reached the lowest point in 1978, both the local government and residents began the revitalisation of their community. In the first decade of



revitalisation, Miyama people concentrated on reclaiming their cultivated land and, since 1989, the Miyama government has promoted tourism development by emphasising the area's distinctive rural environments. In order to initiate tourism development, Miyama Town obtained substantial funding from the national government because there was an entitlement under the terms of *gurin tūrisumu* policies.

**Plate 3:** Traditional thatched houses in Miyama



Source: Author photo

Tourism development in Miyama is successful according to the number of tourist arrivals which dramatically increased from 240,000 in 1989 to 700,000 in 2003 (Miyama-choshi Hensan linkai 2005). This success is partly a result of Miyama becoming well-known for having a typical *satoyama* which includes not only the whole setting of mountains and forests but also traditionally thatched houses. In 2003 the deputy mayor claimed that the scenery in Miyama consisted of rivers, paddy fields, paths, houses and bushes, and that these elements were used to actualise tourism in Miyama. He pointed out that it was necessary for local residents to be in harmony with and co-exist with nature in order to sustain the *satoyama* as well as to survive in such a remote place. Concerning visitors, this deputy mayor

hoped that visitors enjoyed meeting local people and were inspired by the local-urban interaction. He also expected that these visitors would recognise the advantages of living in Miyama. Accordingly, *satoyama* is a key concept in realising tourism development in Miyama.

The most popular tourist site in Miyama is Kita Village which was selected as an Important Preservation District for Groups of Historic Structures in 1993 owing to its recognition as an outstanding mountain village. Kita was approved as an Important Preservation District not only because of a group of traditional houses with thatched roofs but also because the surrounding views were typical of the scenery described in old Japanese folk tales.

This village once experienced not only the downturn of agriculture and forestry but also the ageing of the population. As a result, on the one hand old houses were not replaced by new ones and, on the other hand, alternative commercial activities were needed to increase the existing villagers' income and to encourage young people to move into the village as new immigrants. Accordingly, from the middle of the 1980s the residents started to consider tourism development by using their living environment as the inspiration for a new local revitalising activity. After a campaign for the nomination as a national property, in 1993 Kita village was selected as the 36th Preservation District.

Miyama's case indicates that a rural community can create and develop its own tourism resources by using three different frameworks simultaneously. This means that the determination of resources because of the human-nature interaction is the result of the synchronous multiple movements. In addition, these movements involve not only rural residents but also national and international authorities, and tourists.

### **Miyama residents and tourism: different perspectives on rural environments**

In this section, the utilisation of rural environments by different residents who are involved in tourism practices in Miyama is described, by referring to the term resources. The residents in Miyama can be categorised into four different groups. The first group is the people of Miyama origin who were born, grew up and live in Miyama, whereas the second one is the people of Miyama origin who once lived in

urban areas for their education and/or work, but now live in Miyama. The third is the people whose relatives are the people of Miyama origin and who now live in Miyama, and the fourth is the people who did not have any connection to Miyama but they moved to Miyama in line with tourism development.

Concerning the relation between these different types of people and rural environments, the following points can be seen. For the first group, the people of Miyama origin, rural environments are resources for their agricultural and forestry activities, and these people continue to use rural environments for their cultivation. According to the leader of a communal organisation, they are the only people who can protect the environment in Miyama. He claims that the people of Miyama origin have taken 300 years to create the current scenery of rural environments by engaging in agriculture and forestry. Nowadays, the number of local farmers and foresters has decreased, but unless local residents continue to cultivate the land, the beautiful scenery of Miyama, which attracts many tourists, will disappear. Neither tourists nor outsiders consider that they should manage rural environments by practising agriculture and forestry. In this respect, rural environments are mainly ecological resources, and the people in the first group consider that they should continue to use them in order to manage the environment.

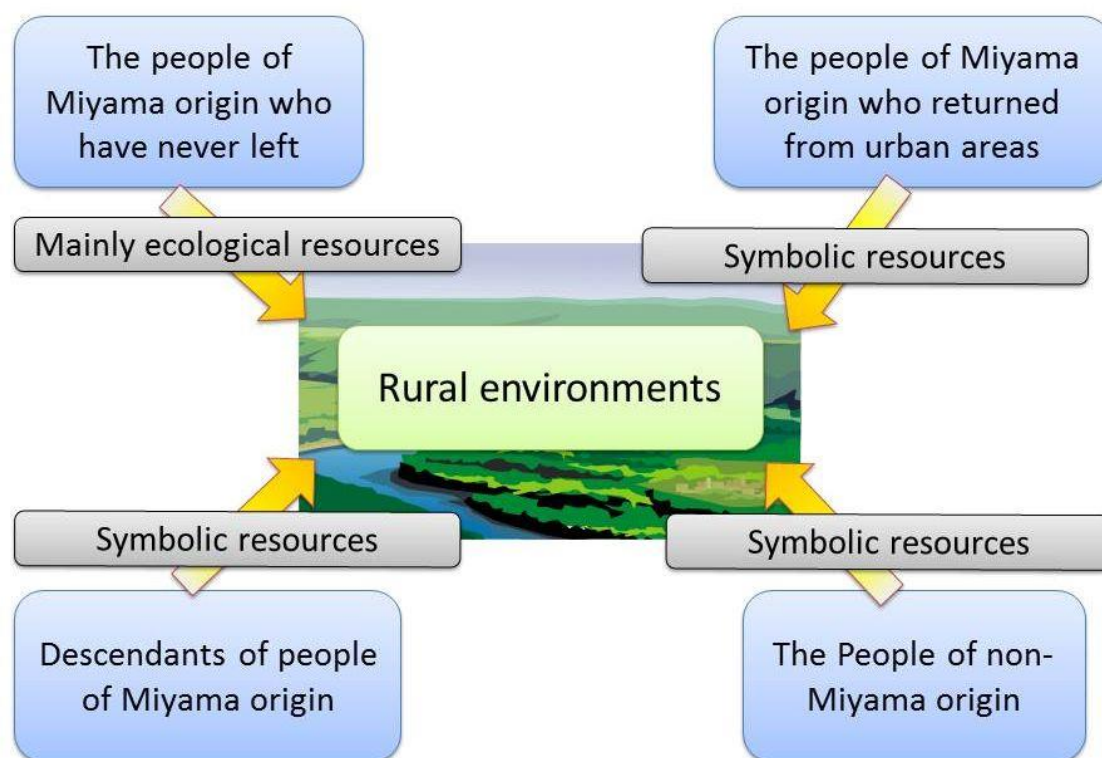
The people in the second group once moved to urban areas. Miyama Town is a remote rural community in which educational and employment opportunities are limited, and so a number of young people could not choose to stay in Miyama after their compulsory education. However, after Miyama Town promoted its tourism development, young people became able to choose to return to Miyama after completing their education, to take on full-time jobs in tourism businesses. For these people, rural tourism development creates a new opportunity and rural environments are probably symbolic resources for their new career and lifestyle.

A similar pattern can be seen for the third group. The people in this group have some relatives who were from Miyama Town. Their relatives faced the same difficulties as the people in the second group did, and they chose to move out from Miyama and settled in urban areas. However, the success of tourism development in Miyama

offers a new opportunity for their descendants to move back to Miyama. For this group, rural environments in Miyama are also symbolic resources.

The fourth group is the people who moved to Miyama from urban areas. These people have diverse reasons for choosing to live in Miyama, such as for their artistic activities, for their living with domesticated animals, for seeking a naturalistic lifestyle, for long-term academic research and so forth. Some of them have reasonable financial resources, and most of them have favourable relationships with urban dwellers. However, various people in this group started their own small businesses in the tourism industry, such as a shop selling herbs or souvenirs. Tourism development in Miyama provides them an alternative and additional business opportunity. In addition, after Miyama became famous as a tourist site, the people in the fourth group could be more proud of leaving urban areas and of selecting their new lifestyle in the countryside. In this context, rural environments are symbolic resources which provide a variety of values for the people of non-Miyama origin.

**Figure 2:** Different types of residents in Miyama



To sum up, various residents in Miyama utilise rural environments differently. Only for the people of Miyama origin, rural environments are ecological resources and they utilise them for their agriculture and forestry, but for other stakeholders, rural environments in Miyama are symbolic resources which enable them to choose a new life in Miyama and to have an alternative economic opportunity to one in urban areas (Figure 2).

## Conclusions

In this paper, the utilisation of rural environments for tourism is evaluated by referring to various publications concerning resources, by re-examining the different catalysts for rural tourism in Japan, and by analysing the case study of Miyama Town, Kyoto Prefecture, Japan.

Today it is common knowledge that resources are defined by the interaction between human beings and the environment, and tourism resources are determined by the interests of stakeholders in rural environments. These rural environments are utilised for other industries as well, and so an appropriate combination of utilisation for different industries is crucial. A key aspect when examining multiple uses of rural environments is the recognition of resources as either ecological or symbolic.

In Japan, there were three different catalysts for change in the way rural environments were utilised as potential tourism resources. First, the gap between urban and rural areas expanded, and as a result, rural residents came to suffer various problems such as depopulation and the downturn of agriculture and forestry. Rural communities came to demand new economic activities alternatives to traditional ones, and the national government promoted rural tourism by emphasising the value of rural environments. Second, nationwide urbanisation caused environmental destruction, and the word *satoyama* became a keyword of environmental discussion. The concept of *satoyama* was effectively used in ecotourism development in Japan. Third, in the 1990s the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties came to cover rural environments and any rural area nominated as a national property has gained exquisite value on their rural environments. Accordingly, rural environments are utilised for tourism in multiple ways.

Miyama Town, Kyoto Prefecture, Japan, has succeeded in promoting its rural tourism development in all the multiple ways explained above. There are diverse residents who are involved in tourism practices, and they can be categorised into four groups. An evaluation of the relation between these four groups and rural environments shows that only the people of Miyama origin who have never left from Miyama recognise rural environments as ecological resources and attempt to continue to cultivate the land. In contrast, the other three groups enjoy their opportunities for actualising their preferred lifestyle and having jobs in Miyama. For these people, the rural environments in Miyama are symbolic resources.

Concerning the outcomes described above, the following points are noted. Today, the utilisation of rural environments is diverse, and there are various ways to add value to rural environments for the purpose of tourism development. There are also different types of residents ranging from 'native' to 'immigrants' and their goals of tourism practices are discrete. However, only 'native' residents, namely the people of Miyama origin who have never left from Miyama, understand their responsibilities for the management of rural environments, and they are the only people who attempt to continue to cultivate the land to conserve the beautiful scenery in Miyama. In contrast, the other stakeholders do not seem to contribute to the conservation of tourist attractions but only benefit from rural tourism development in order to achieve their more desirable lifestyle.

It is essential for rural tourism that the beautiful scenery of rural environments remains intact, but only native residents are involved in the activity for managing, or in other words, producing the beauty. All the other residents, ranging from returnees to immigrants, take the role of users, or namely consumers, of resources. Although there are multiple ways to utilise rural environments for tourism, according to the case study of Miyama, these environments as resources are mainly used, consumed and exploited, and are not actively (re)produced and developed. It seems to be crucial for all stakeholders to understand the concept provided by the discussion of ecological and symbolic resources and to develop a framework for the conservation of rural environments as ecological resources. In this paper, the assumption concerning the importance of rural environmental management for tourism development is analysed, because it is fundamental to recognise the nature of

utilisation of rural environments in order to continue to promote rural tourism development.

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